

RHIZOCTONIA SOLANI, THE CAUSE OF AERIAL BLIGHT OF NATAL-PLUM
CARISSA GRANDIFLORA, IN FLORIDA

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Natal-plum, *Carissa grandiflora* A. DC., is a tropical to subtropical shrub that is native to Africa, Asia, and Australia. It is grown in South Florida as an ornamental plant because of its handsome compact habit and dense, beautiful green foliage (Fig. 1A). The fruit is also utilized for making jelly and preserves.

Rhizoctonia solani Kühn is the causal agent of aerial blight of *C. grandiflora* (1), undoubtedly one of the most serious diseases of this plant and often one of the limiting factors in its production. This fungus is world-wide in its distribution and is destructively pathogenic to a very extensive range of host plants (4).



Fig. 1. Aerial (*Rhizoctonia*) blight of *Carissa grandiflora*: A) healthy; B) diseased.

SYMPTOMS. Carissa plants infected with *R. solani* exhibit foliage symptoms characterized by brown spots which are irregular in shape, and faintly zonate. The necrotic spots enlarge and soon envelop the entire leaf. The blighted leaves usually occur at the base of the plant, progressing upward into the plant as favorable conditions of high humidity and warm temperatures prevail (Fig. 1B). The ends of branches with their young tip leaves are also often observed completely blighted. The dead, brown leaves tend to slightly roll and curl, some cling and hang onto the stems, whereas others fall to the soil surface. Root systems are often necrotic and reduced in size.

CONTROL. Any one of the following fungicides - Benlate 50 WP at 1/2 lb/100 gal. Daconil 75 WP at 1 1/2 lb/100 gal, and Mertect 160 60 WP at 3/4 lb/100 gal -when applied three times to well spaced plants as a foliage and soil drench at weekly intervals provides highly effective control of this disease (1,3). For continued control it is suggested that monthly drench application be made thereafter, varying the interval as might be necessary.

Literature Cited

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